The Fame to Please: The Normalisation of Celebrities

By Dirk Schulz, University of Cologne, Germany

Abstract:
A reiterated statement following Michael Jackson's cardiac arrest last year was that mega stardom, in western culture, had come to an end. Indeed, while fame and stardom apparently remain desirable currencies in our society, the paradigms which determine success and failure have visibly changed. On the one hand the proliferation of a public exposure of "ordinary people" has undermined the notion of exceptionality as being necessary for fame. On the other hand, while pop culture has always contributed to the public negotiation of norms and values, the current manifestations of judge and jury through different media turn celebrities into detainees and their monitoring into a panoptical affair. As public figures, who crave the spotlight, they nowadays have to accept the ongoing documentation of their doings, thereby ceaselessly supplying images for a mediarena, in which their on- and offstage conduct, especially in relation to sex, gender and sexuality is discussed and judged.

1 A reiterated statement following Michael Jackson's cardiac arrest last year was that mega stardom, in Western culture, had come to an end. Indeed, while fame and stardom apparently remain desirable currencies in our society, the paradigms which determine success and failure have visibly changed. On the one hand the proliferation of a public exposure of "ordinary people" has undermined the notion of exceptionality as being necessary for fame. On the other hand, while pop culture has always contributed to the public negotiation of norms and values, the current manifestations of judge and jury through different media turn celebrities into detainees and their monitoring into a panoptical affair. Taking into account that "[i]n modern societies people are increasingly watched, and their activities documented and classified with a view to creating populations that conform to social norms" (Inglis: 5) the different approach to celebrities may be regarded as a consequential outcome of a generally increasing surveillance culture. As public figures, who crave the spotlight, they nowadays have to accept the ongoing documentation of their doings, thereby ceaselessly supplying images for a "mediarena", in which their on- and offstage conduct, especially in relation to sex, gender and sexuality is discussed and judged.

2 In his study *A Short History of Celebrity* (2010) Fred Inglis posits that "the fairly new concept of celebrity may tell us plenty about what is to be cherished and built upon as well as what is to be despised and ought to be destroyed in the subsequent invention of modern society." (Inglis 3) Indeed, through the abidingly intermingled documentation of career moves and private affairs celebrities provide narratives of acquittal and repudiation, probation and conviction. The media's relentless gaze does not allow for "steps out of line" or lasting sentiments of privilege and grandeur. Consequently it has become a prerequisite for public

figures to present themselves as humble and "normal" instead of "unique" and "different" as had been the standard attributions to "stars" in former days. As Tyler Cowen likewise posits:

> Modern fame removes the luster from societal role models. Today almost all individuals appear less meritorious, given the commercial incentives for intense media scrutiny. The more we see of our leaders and the more we know about them, the less exalted they appear, even if they are no worse than heroes from time past. (Cowen: 49-50)

These are the evident economic and technical reasons that seem to be responsible for the growing demystification and overwriting of superstardom in favour of a proliferating celebrity culture as an abiding media spectacle. But other reasons become discernible, reasons which are evocative of a turn in the contemporary cultural mindset.

3 The continued tabloid-, television-, and internet-exposure of celebrities has become a means of staging public negotiations of values and norms, bringing together increasingly fragmented and individualised societies. The contemporary celebrity panopticon creates "a social relationship between people that is mediated by images […] It is not something *added* to the real world - not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society's real unreality." (Debord: 12-13) The apparent shift within Western culture from viewing stars as ideals into detainees within the panoptic view can be retributed to their function of providing available points of references in an altered structuring of sociality:

> Celebrity is also one of the adhesives which, at a time when the realms of public politics, civil society, and private domestic life are increasingly fractured and enclosed in separate enclaves, serves to pull those separate entities together and to do its bit towards maintaining social cohesion and common values. (ibid. 4)

Rather than being glamorous events catering to escapist fantasies of the viewing public, discourses surrounding celebrities now subscribe to a regulating principle that does not allow for extravagancies, but demands the acceptance of and subjection to *common* laws. Instead of showing us the means and potentialities of breaking out of social conventions, of leaving the confinements of ordinary lives and common duties, they now lend themselves to public demonstrations of discipline and regulation. Their incessant surveillance, the ongoing scrutiny and public contemplation of their attempts at "transgression", works to effect and condition appropriate behaviour/performances.

4 As Judith Butler notes, "[a]s that which relies on categories that render individuals socially interchangeable with one another, regulation is bound up with the process of normalization." (55) This apparent "process of normalization" within celebrity culture has serious implications for its current staging of gender and sexuality. Celebrity culture's increasing emphasis on exchangeability, discipline and malleability makes it much more

difficult and risky for the performer to challenge the public eye, whose interest in the famous has notably changed. The advent of casting shows by which most contemporary celebrities enter the media as well as of multiple formations of internet communities most prominently bring to the fore what Foucault in *Disclipline and Punish* (1977) already observed as a growing pleasure in

> the activity of judging. […] Born along by the omnipresence of the mechanisms of discipline, basing itself on all the carceral apparatuses, it has become one of the major functions of our society. The judges of normality are everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker'-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he may find himself, subjects to it his body, his gestures, his behavior, his aptitudes, his achievements. The carceral network, in its compact or disseminated forms, with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power. (304)

The celebrity-judge now evidently needs to be added to the list of the judges of normality, which means: everybody.

5 The popularity and easy accessibility of casting and "reality" shows and their continued staging of the candidates' required "sexiness" guarantees a widespread distribution of regulating ideas of how to perform one's gender and sexuality in order to please. As can be observed, even on shows that proclaim to search for musical or dramatic talent, the contestants' sex appeal becomes a major factor in the jury's comments and verdicts. This aspect of their performance is always something they need to "work on". While Paul Potts and Susan Boyle, two highly publicised and successful contestants of *Britain's Got Talent*, may be regarded as counter-examples the continued stress on their difference from the conventional casting/celebrity type has safely marked them as exceptions proving the rule. Moreover, their celebrated "otherness" is not due to daring performances or because they authoratively appear to challenge the norm. Their "rags to riches" stories rather help to fend off complaints regarding the programmes' predictability and assist in maintaining the public interest in formula shows that always need new candidates and devoted viewers.[1]

6 What is noteworthy in the context of casting and reality shows is that the accompanying narratives and reviews exceed the duration of the shows, although many "careers" seem to end rather than take off with the finale of the show. Indeed, the main pleasure gained by witnessing such formula shows in particular and celebrity culture in

[1] Meanwhile Paul Potts has had his teeth capped and wears upmarket clothes. After the show's ending Susan Boyle needed to check into a clinic due to exhaustion and now likewise has had a complete "makeover". Thus both performers meanwhile line up with the status quo of celebrity instead of challenging it.

general seems to derive from a pleasure in the democratisation of judge and jury. As Ellis Cashmere in his study *Celebrity/Culture* discerns:

> Celebs must surrender themselves to live in a kind of virtual Panopticon - the ideal prison where the cells are arranged around a central watchtower in which concealed authority figures can inspect without being inspected. We, the fans, are in the watchtower and the celebs are open to our inspection. The moment they withdraw or become reticent, we lose interest and start peering at others. Just as we vote wannabe celebs out of the Big Brother house, we can send celebs into oblivion. And we know it. (4)

Cashmore's delineation of celebrity culture as a panoptic endeavour already points out an evident change in the relationship and power distribution of celebrity and public. Another implication, however, needs to be taken into consideration. The public's apparently increased juridical power regarding the making and breaking of stars has not merely led to impatience with attempts at withdrawal and reticence from the objects under scrutiny. Indeed, within the virtual celebrity panopticon there *is no* means of escaping the relentless gaze as a possibility of self-defence.

7 The public's awareness of and vote in the untiring manufacturing and disposal of celebrities is one important and determining factor for and evidence of a cultural shift. But what may be even more significant is the extent, by which the public's attention and pleasure in judging is relocated from an appraisal of an individual's creative capacities and achievements to the media exposure and discussion of his or her shortcomings and downfalls. A public negotiation of a person's appropriate or delinquent behaviour accompanies every career and through television, tabloids and the internet *everyone* can participate. Sex, gender and sexuality become, or rather, remain the main benchmarks when it comes to judging the individual performer. And by means of a proliferating instalment of anonymous judging communities on the internet everyone may

> take pleasure in judging presidents, leaders, and famous entertainers by especially harsh and oversimplified standards. In the realm of the stars prejudice is given free reign to rule opinion. Fans can let off critical steam, or express vicarious love, without fear of repercussions, and without having to confront the complexity of the moral issues involved. (Cowen: 6)

The apparent shift of power dissemination and its current display throughout the different media puts much more pressure on the individual celebrity. Inventing and staging a public persona on one's own terms becomes much more difficult, because the pictures and narratives which the performer aims to distribute and sell are continuously undercut by those, which the celebrity may rather not show. The pose, henceforth, has become much harder to strike, at least as a means to create an enduring image.

8 To discern this change of presentation a look at the icons of the late 1970s and early 80s is strikingly informative. It becomes apparent that gender bending surfaced not only as a playful engagement with gender norms within subcultures, but rather became a prerequisite for a performer's mass appeal. The attraction of the former "sex symbols" evidently rested on their excessive self-stylisations and a pleasure in a glamorized pose of ambiguity. The blatant and widespread pleasure in the pose echoed Oscar Wilde's conviction that "the first duty in life is to be as artificially as possible. What the second duty is, no one has yet discovered." The androgynous look of the former pop stars rendered their physicality and, due to a generally assumed correspondence between the sexed body and desire, their sexuality undecidable. Due to their use of heavy make up and colourful clothing their bodily attributes, their "flesh", was deflected and rendered less palpable. In the "good old" days of gender bending the performances of many celebrities challenged "an opposition between a style that one assumes and one's 'true' being" and rather foregrounded that "the mask *is* the face" (Sontag).

9 Whereas the music of the 80s has experienced a comeback in recent years, both in the original or in a slightly revamped shape, the looks and fashion statements of that time are primarily commented upon in derogatory terms. While fashion obviously always is a matter of debate and a temporal affair, the general bashing of the 80s investment in gender bending vestments evidently speaks of a more thorough change in our cultural climate regarding gender and sexuality. This change has been initiated by and carried out in "the increasingly strained relationship between stardom and celebrity and artifice and authenticity". (Holmes and Redmond: 5) Although casting shows foreground how gender can and needs to be enacted to be convincing *as* performance, thus undermining the notion of its authentic correspondence to "sex", they also function as mediated rites of passage. The participants are initiated into the means and meanings of girl- and boyhood. On the one hand they learn how to *do* gender and on the other that femininity and accordingly masculinity are quintessential features, but need to be discovered, examined and perfected. Consequently the body, the residence of both, performative potentialities and their limitations, has become *the* site of inspection and discipline. Increasingly

> celebrities communicate through their flesh: the popular media produces a gaze that focuses on the shape, size, *look* of the body, and fans idolize and decry the famous on the basis of the perfect (and increasingly) imperfect bodies they display. (ibid.: 15)

The times of overall glambiguity seem to be over because, the pose now always demands to be ex-posed and because attempts at denaturalisation are seen as poses *only*, not as a "serious" means to question and challenge heteronormativity. As an evident backlash against two

decades of poststructuralist thinking and postmodern playfulness we are witnessing a discursive return to the (sexed) body as a natural if formable essence of a person. And in our relentless panoptic view on celebrities, they've become the public role models or warning examples regarding its proper presentation.

10 The unresolved paradox of artifice and authenticity had been embraced and put into creative practice by stars such as David Bowie, Annie Lennox, Boy George, and Madonna. Now it is met with rigorous attempts at its categorical separation through the panoptic conviction of "deceptive" appearances. There are the images and performances, which celebrities and PR-networks create for us to see and those they probably would like to hide from the public view. Thereby the official, artificial poses become regulated by the intimate and "real" images of celebrities, seemingly revealing to us the "true face behind the mask". By this means, the public's disbelief in the performers' "unnatural" stage persona is apparently granted and attestable by bringing the "true selves" of celebrities into focus. The popularity of celebrity exposure in all media speaks of a growing pleasure in seeing public figures in humiliating situations, bereft of the means to pose. But can the paradox of artifice and authenticity ultimately be solved by the regulating, panoptic view on stars? Su Holmes and Sean Redmond, in their introduction to the volume *Framing Celebrity* (2006), are similarly sceptical of the possibility to differentiate between the real and pretence:

> One of the central paradoxes of the construction and consumption of stars and celebrities rests on the supposed "unmediated" nature of people's relationship with them, and the highly manufactured way they are brought into vision. A range of new media technologies and formats has made the dialogue between actuality and fakery much more charged. Famous people are now often captured in the raw, "up close and personal", yet they are also fabricated by the ever-expanding reach of PR networks and digital technologies which manipulate and distort the "real". (15)

What Holmes and Redmond seem to neglect is that it is not only a longing for unmediated intimacy, which the celebrity panopticon aims to satisfy, but a longing for poetic justice and "correction".

11 Another paradox of our culture here becomes apparent. Visibility is necessary to become recognised as a subject, but recognition also exposes the subject and makes it vulnerable to regulating forces. Visibility and self-exposure remain and may even become increasingly desirable currencies because to be seen confirms our existence and personhood. And still, in face of the overtly displayed cynicism and spite conferred upon them, celebrities evidently live lives validated by the look of others. They seem to experience a surplus of confirmation and recognition and in a "mediated space […] constructed as special and significant […] receive a form of symbolic capital." (ibid. 10) In a culture "marked by a great

deal of anxiety, doubt and confusion over who- and how to be in a world where identity is felt to be […] more questionable" (ibid. 2), celebrities seem to experience the utmost acknowledgment of the existence as a meaningful subject. But on another note, this surplus of visibility comes at a price since it does not allow for "escaping the clutch of those norms by which recognition is conferred." (Butler: 3)

12 Instead, the modern celebrity panopticon can be regarded as the most visible "form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted. As a norm that appears independent of the practices that it governs, its ideality is the reinstituted effect of those very practices." (ibid. 48) Stars and celebrities have become more vulnerable due to their incessant exposure as the example of Michael Jackson clearly shows. His career and public admiration began to falter, once the raving reviews of his musical genius became overwritten with the ongoing narratives and verdicts on his private life, in which his "extraordinariness" was judged very differently in comparison to the one displayed in videos or live performances. Performers still can exaggerate, titillate and provoke on stage, but offstage performing ordinariness has become a prerequisite as Graeme Turner in his study *Ordinary People and the Media* (2010) similarly notes: "Performing ordinariness has become an end in itself, and thus a rich and (it seems) inexhaustible means of generating new content for familiar formats." (221)

13 The recent presentation of celebrities as monitored objects rather than authoritative subjects, quickly "outvoted" and replaced if too fractious has led to very different skill requirements. Celebrities do not attempt to challenge but willingly provide the images, by which sex and gender norms become consolidated. In their public appearances they enact the norm instead of subverting it in glamorised ways. Their enactments shape our ideas of how femininity or masculinity become readable and recitable. Or, inversely, they show us how a body can be disciplined, shaped and manipulated to adequately enact gender norms. As Butler notes "[s]ex is made understandable through the signs that indicate how it should be read or understood. These bodily indicators are the cultural means by which the sexed body is read." (2004: 91) Because of the intermingled documentation of public and "private" performances, gender within the realms of popular culture is not a political, if playful, enactment of possibilities anymore. In a culture of visual repletion, images of Madonna's "crotch grabbing" or NBA player Dennis Rodman's wedding in drag have lost the subversive vigour they once may have had. Instead the appropriate, heteronormative gender performance can and needs to be learned to become successful. Its desired enactment becomes "worked out", incorporated

and disciplined before our eyes, to confirm rather than complicate or question the alleged rooted- and interrelatedness of sex, gender, and desire.

14 As can be noted, the artificiality of the pose, the excessiveness of and play with gender and sexual ambiguity of the 70s and 80s has been narrowed down if not given up, at least in mainstream culture. The "lesbian kiss" meanwhile may have become a token in many performances of female pop stars, but rather confirms the notion of female homosexuality as foreplay at most and tantalising spectacle at best, pleasing rather than challenging phallic supremacy. The rare occurrences of gender bending are met with disbelief or seen as evident signs of the performer's homosexuality. Even in the cases of seeming exceptions to this rule within popular culture, such as Pink or Bill Kaulitz, the singer of *Tokio Hotel*, their heterosexuality is continuously put into question as if they were "betraying" the heteronormative formula of proper gender presentation. Indeed, despite an apparently more tolerant attitude towards public figures who admit their "homosexuality", its distinction from "heterosexuality" must be regulated by such discourses to not put the assumed correspondence between sex, gender, and sexuality seriously into question. Thus, sexual ambiguity of celebrities or their efforts at evading the subject are met with the relentless scrutiny of their private life and a discursive incitement to confess. Uncertainty would pose a considerable threat to the

> cultural imperative to produce, for purposes of ideological regulation, a putative difference [which would] otherwise count as the same if sexual identity were not now interpreted as an essence installed in the unstable space between sex and the newly articulated category of sexuality or sexual orientation. (Edelmann 10)

While in the 70s and 80s, questions, rumours and speculations regarding the respective performer's sexuality could also ensue, ambiguity on the whole was publicly embraced and celebrated. It did not need to be countered or scrutinised. Confusion was presented as a possible means to escape from confining conceptions of sex, gender and sexuality, imag(e)ining different possible enactments of gender, independent of the individual's "sex" or sexuality. Through the growing apparatus of media surveillance that constantly reminds us of the "artificiality" of such poses, however, the pleasure of the public in celebrity culture has notably shifted.

15 At a time of general disillusionment, scepticism and a proliferation of personal exposure on the internet, being caught up in disciplining and regulating processes oneself, our panoptic view on celebrities at least guarantees

> the pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpates, brings to light. […] The power that lets itself be invaded by the

> pleasure it is pursuing. And opposite it, power asserting itself in the pleasure of showing off, scandalising, or resisting it." (Foucault: 45)

The parameters of valuing celebrities and the narratives accompanying their on- or off-stage performances have changed. Thus I strongly disagree with Ruth Penfold-Mounce who, in her study *Celebrity Culture and Crime* (2009), maintains that "stars embody the independent individual *par excellence*, representing the societal-held understanding of success, freedom and accessibility, which […] celebrity culture propagates." (52) Stars, nowadays, are not merely judged according to their presentation of a "different", "extraordinary" and "more liberated" way of living. because according to the multiplying media platforms, "everybody" has the potential to achieve fame. The real challenge which celebrities currently face is, whether they are able to cope with the pressure of a continuous public scrutiny of their overall conduct. The success story of the latest stars does not so much depend on "a triumph, but the review, the 'parade', an ostentatious form of the examination. In it the 'subjects' [are] presented as 'objects' to the observation of a power that [is] manifested only by its gaze." (Foucault: 187-188) Thus, along with the growing diversification of media discourses and their easy accessibility, a very different formula for public recognition and its ensuing regulation has emerged and a different performance is expected.

16 The media is not an apparatus subservient to or simply divulging celebrity. On the contrary, we can observe "the media's construction of the private identity: the personal, the ordinary and the everyday." (Turner: 223) We witness the paradoxical process of performers being disciplined and humiliated by the, oftentimes self-proclaimed, judges of normalcy on the one hand, and the suggested promise of "a spectacular form of personal validation" (ibid.: 223) on the other. Thus, to become a respected and liberated subject, celebrities aim to win the vote of the viewer through conforming and pleasing presentations. Celebrities thus

> must be subjected to a regulatory apparatus, as Foucault would have called it, in order to get to the point where something like an exercise in freedom becomes possible. One has to submit to labels and names, to incursions, to invasions; one has to be gauged against measures of normalcy; and one has to pass the test. (Butler: 91)

The individual's share in her or his emergence as a "star" and the maintenance of this status not only has visibly decreased, but has become visibly produced and regulated. The growing and unremitting media surveillance, which accompanies celebrities from the beginning of their careers has twofold implications. The panoptical ceremony of discipline, the "ostentatious form of exam-ination" as Foucault terms it, implants, showcases and reiterates a story of success available through obedience and hard work. It also reminds all aspirants from the start that their power is confined and indebted to the goodwill of the public and the media

rather than their talent. Celebrities lend themselves to the discursive "production of the parameters of personhood, that is, making persons according to abstract norms that at once condition and exceed the lives they make- and break." (Butler: 56) And they are also constantly reminded of their exchangeability rather than their exceptionality.

17 Along with an overall expanding sexualisation disseminated throughout the different media, our culture insists on sexual expressions and confessions and becomes ever more impatient with a refusal to be definable and manageable accordingly. The proper modes of expressions and confessions not only can but need to be learned and, in regard of celebrity culture, "in a sense, the implicit regulation of gender takes place through the explicit regulation of sexuality." (ibid.: 49) Foucault's tracing of our culture's attitude towards sexuality in *The History of Sexuality* evidently remains unmitigated, namely that

> [i]t is through sex - in fact, an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality - that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of a history). (1978: 155-156)

With regard to celebrity culture this model works in a slightly altered way, but for the same purposes. While stars are produced before our eyes, they by the same token function as "a reflection in which the public studies and adjusts its own image of itself." (Durgnat: 137-138) The self-presentations of many contemporary celebrities indeed feed on the demand for sexual explicitness and seem to celebrate the merits of "sexual liberation". It remains difficult, however, to draw the lines between liberated expressions of (female) sexuality and the continued objectification of performers as sexual objects within the current mediarena.

18 For the most part, celebrity culture not only leaves a reiterated relation between sex, gender and sexuality untroubled but rather assists to naturalise this triad in confining, heteronormative ways. It is evident that the body as spectacle and scrutinised object continues to be the foremost measure by which female agency in particular is judged. To combine ordinary- with sexiness currently has become the most propagated image by which celebrity for women may be achieved and maintained. Indeed many performances of contemporary female stars profit from and expand on a successful formula of (self) stagings, which Richard Dyer already discerns in his article on "Four Films of Lana Turner" in 1977:

> The sexy-ordinary configuration has become "glamour" […]. Glamour and ordinariness are antithetical notions. The ordinary and the everyday are by definition not glamorous. Yet glamour […] is based on manufacture, and can be seen to be the process, the industrial process, by which the ordinary is rendered glamorous. The

> glamour industry […] sold itself on the idea that, given its products, anyone- any woman anyway- could become beautiful. (92)

Moreover, the glamorised enactment of seemingly antithetical notions meanwhile adds another combination to the winning formula, namely the "virginal" and the "sexual",. Britney Spears most prominently brought this successful recipe to the fore and has been imitated by many other contemporary young female performers.

19 It seems that nobody expects them to *actually* fulfil this image in "real life". Rather, the documentation of their private inadequacies affirms its unlivability. However, their presentations serve to underwrite that the ever-pleasing sexy-virginal- ordinary configuration is what women *should present* and thus clearly continues to inform and condition our notion of "ideal" femininity. It seems as if the panoptic focus on popular culture regarding the sexual conduct and performance of its representatives is a discursive effort to appease the general paradox and enigma of sex and gender. What the discourses on celebrities teach us is that, time and again, it is allright to fail in one's attempt at approximating the governing norms of gender and sexuality. But, by the same token, it is essential to attempt this approximation again and again.

20 On the one hand sex still is thought to be and, in its mediated omnipresence, reproduced as *the* locality of a person's essential truth and reason, but on the other hand sex remains

> an object of great suspicion; the general and disquieting meaning that pervades our conduct and our existence, in spite of ourselves; the point of weakness where evil portents reach through to us; the fragment of darkness that we each carry within us: a general signification, a universal secret, an omnipresent cause, a fear that never ends. (Foucault, 1978: 69)

The panoptic view on celebrities measures their performance on stage with their private affairs, exploiting their sexual conduct as the site of hidden secrets and ultimate truths. It is the most visible effort at governing, disciplining and regulating sexual potentialities that otherwise would govern and determine our conduct uncontrollably and thus pose a threat to the established order. With the promise of seeing all attempts at transgression documented, punished and corrected, the pleasure and interest of the viewing public in judging is continuously satisfied while the celebrities likewise are warned not to overstep the negotiated boundaries of appropriate behaviour.

21 To conclude, the pop panopticon nowadays serves as the regulating apparatus, by which a heteronormative conception of sex, gender and sexual difference becomes widely distributed and stabilised. The monitoring and relentless gaze of the public, whose pleasure in

watching and judging grants no room for individual moments of flight, rather demands obedience to the governing principles of appropriate conduct. Madonna, the former icon of subversive gender play once *was* able to address sexuality as a fundamental cultural issue, while simultaneously challenging restrictive notions on its "gendered" enactments. Along with other pop stars of the 1970s and 1980s she drew attention to the endless potentialities of a self whose performances can never express an essential truth. The new generation of female pop icons *still* foregrounds sexuality as a matter of performance, but rather in order to indicate how to perform the sexed body in order to please, to conform and confirm rather than to question the reiterated and naturalised indicators of sexual and gender difference.

Works Cited

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Cashmore, Ellis. Celebrity/Culture. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Cowen, Tyler. *What Price Fame?* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994.

Durgnat, Raymond. *Films and Feelings*. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.

Dyer, Richard. *Only Entertainment*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Edelmann, Lee. 1994. *Homographesis: essays in gay literature and cultural theory*. New York: Routledge.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House Books, 1977.

---. *The History of Sexuality.An Introduction*. London: Penguin Books, 1978.

Holmes, Su and Sean Redmond (eds). "Introduction" In: *Framing Celebrity. New Directions in Celebrity Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. 1-16.

Inglis, Fred. *A Short History of Celebrity*. Princeton: Prnceton University Press, 2010.

Penfold-Mounce, Ruth. *Celebrity Culture and Crime. The Joy of Transgression*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009.

Turner, Graeme. *Ordinary People and the Media. The Demotic Turn*. London: Sage Publications, 2010.